

Washington, DC -- On Thursday, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-7), a former 3-Star Admiral, met with Boiling Springs veteran, Senior Vice Commander, Larry Babitts — from the Military Order of the Purple Heart — about the need for full funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs and other legislative priorities.

“As someone who wore the uniform, few things are more important to me than our obligation to support our veterans, especially our aging veteran population who served during WWII and the Korean War,” said Sestak. “That is why I was extremely pleased to meet with Purple Heart recipient, Larry Babitts, to discuss his organization’s legislative priorities, including the need to fully fund VA health care. Additionally, we discussed the need to make it easier for spouses of Purple Heart recipients to become members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, which I fully support.”

Also, on January 31st, Joe voted to increase funding in the continuing resolution for veterans health care by \$3.6 billion to provide health care for 325,000 veterans.

Joe and Vice Commander Babitts discussed the need to enact legislation to amend the Charter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart. At the time of the Charter in 1958, it was not envisioned that there would be numerous female Purple Heart recipients; therefore, no provision was made for accepting male spouses of female recipients. With the ongoing conflicts, which are generating many female Purple Heart recipients who become members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the two agreed on the need to extend eligibility to parents, spouses, and siblings, and the need for legislation to enact this change since the group was established by an act of Congress.

2007 is a very special year for America and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. This year marks the 225th Anniversary of the award of the Badge of Military Merit, the precursor of the Purple Heart Medal. 2007 is the 75th Anniversary of the introduction of the award we now know as the Purple Heart. And 2007 is also the 75th Anniversary of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group

of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. Congress.

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